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SIPDIS

STATE FOR D, P, AF/FO AND AF/S
NSC FOR AFRICA SENIOR DIRECTOR FRAZER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/03/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: INTERNAL MEDIATION EFFORTS BETWEEN MUGABE AND
TSVANGIRAI

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Classified By: Joseph G. Sullivan for reasons 1.5b/d

11. (c) Father Fidelis Mukonori, who has been involved for several years in mediation efforts between President Mugabe and the MDC and who has a long-standing relationship with Mugabe dating back to before independence, told the Ambassador June 3 that Mugabe and Tsvangirai had agreed in principle to a face-to-face meeting inside Zimbabwe, although the date had not yet been set. (MDC sources told us that Mugabe had proposed that the meeting take place privately in Mugabe's rural home and that Tsvangirai cancel planned demonstrations. The MDC tells us that Tsvangirai agreed to cancel demonstrations, but only if the meeting took place before June 2.) Father Fidelis said that it had almost been agreed to schedule the meeting the weekend prior to the MDC's June 2 mass action, but that Mugabe had not wished the meeting to be held under that time pressure. Nonetheless, Father Fidelis believed that he had Mugabe's agreement to meet and that it should be possible to schedule the meeting soon. Fidelis Mukonori thought that a face-to-face meeting would help ease tensions and assure that ongoing, quiet contacts between ZANU-PF and the MDC were more successful. He related that Tsvangirai had told him that Mugabe reminded him of his father and that Mugabe had appreciated this reference.

12. (c) Father Fidelis believed that Mugabe's resignation was definitely on the table with the key issues being the modalities and precise timing of the departure. Fidelis anticipated that it would be important to assure the immunity and well-being of Mugabe and his family and that he be treated with the dignity which Mugabe accorded Ian Smith. Fidelis expected the December ZANU-PF Party Congress to choose a successor, although he said the Congress could be pushed up, after the Ambassador doubted that Zimbabwe could continue in crisis that long. Fidelis said that quiet ZANU-PF/MDC contacts were continuing, including those between Justice Minister Chinimasa and MDC Secretary General Welshman Ncube, but that he believed a meeting at the top was needed to give this a push. Mukonori asked that the US be prepared to encourage dialogue at the right moment.

3.(c) Comment: In the last several months, numerous Zimbabwean and international mediators have put themselves forward. Father Fidelis Mukonori has been at this for some time and has a better-established relationship with Mugabe than most others. Fidelis has in the past been guilty of excessive optimism, but he now has had recent encouragement from Mugabe to take up the mediating role again and Fidelis does appreciate that Mugabe's retirement is the key to resolution of the political crisis. Mugabe has initially welcomed and later stymied a number of mediation efforts in recent months. We are encouraged by the more personal efforts of a Mugabe confidant, but will temper out optimism until after a face-to-face meeting takes place.

SULLIVAN